

felt for generations to come. Mr. Speaker, as we adjourn today, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering, honoring, and paying our last respects to this outstanding American—Allen Gordon Smith, Sr.

RECOGNITION OF THE FIRST AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH OF COLUMBUS' 160TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. MAC COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, 170 years ago, while the manacles of slavery were still fastened on African Americans, twelve Christians—11 whites and a slave named Joseph—founded Columbus' first church, the Ephesus Baptist Church, which was renamed the First Baptist Church. This was in 1830, one year after Columbus, Georgia was granted its charter. Blacks and whites, slaves and free, worshiped God under one roof.

In 1840, after construction of a new building, the First Baptist Church gave the old sanctuary to the mixed black and white congregation, who reorganized as the African Baptist Church. Today, one hundred and sixty years later, after war, reconstruction, oppression, economic depression, and hardships, the First African Baptist Church is still spreading the gospel in Columbus.

This church has a long history of service to its community. Up to the advent of the Civil War, it had an ethnically diverse congregation. After the war, the church gave birth to three different churches: the Metropolitan Baptist Church in 1890, the Friendship Baptist Church in 1906, and the Mt. Tabor Baptist Church in 1908. The church sanctuary has changed four times. Today's main sanctuary was erected in 1915, when the church adopted its present name, the First African Baptist Church.

The congregation of the First African Baptist Church has weathered many storms, but the worst may have been the Great Depression. In 1936, creditors foreclosed on the church. But all was not lost, because four trustees stood in the gap and pledged their personal property to pay the debts. These men were W.A. Talley, J.J. Senior, J.H. Williams, and G.F. Rivers. The congregation stood by these four men of faith and worked to raise the funds to retire the debt.

Mr. Speaker, the First African Baptist Church congregation has been a force for good in Columbus.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Robert M. Dickerson Jr., it continues to play a key role in the city. Rev. Dickerson began the "Gathering of the Children," and restructured the Youth Program. He reorganized the Christian Education ministry. He started the Tuesday noon Bible Study time, the Early Sunday morning worship services, and the Riverfront Easter Sunrise Service. He ordained 11 new deacons and established the Capital Improvement Fund for mid-range and long-range improvements. He also added three ministers to the Ministerial Staff. Additionally, Dr. Dickerson instituted the "Pastor's Unsung Hero" Award presented each November.

He is continuing his work to add new programs to bring the word and comfort of God to the people of Columbus.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the First African Baptist Church of Columbus, its congregation and its leaders. They have been doing a great work in the city for 160 years, and I trust that, Lord willing, they will be spreading the Gospel a hundred years hence.

PARSONS FAMILY FIFTIETH REUNION

HON. WAYNE T. GILCHREST

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the fiftieth reunion of the Thomas Edward Parsons family. The Parsons family is gathering in Oxford, Talbot County, Maryland, on July 29th, to celebrate their reunion at the home of Elaine Valliant Cox. The Parsons family reunion was first held in Royal Oak, Talbot County, Maryland, at the home of William Harris Valliant and instituted to preserve family relationships as their family began to spread beyond Talbot County. The Parsons' family history has been documented in Talbot County, Maryland back to the early nineteenth century. The first reunion was advertised in a local newspaper asking descendants of Thomas and Susan Benson Parsons to gather on August 20, 1951. One hundred eleven members of the Parsons family gathered on the Valliant lawn coming from Idaho, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC. The oldest family member in attendance was Mrs. Margaret Parsons of Oxford, Maryland, wife of Edward Thomas Parsons. She was ninety years of age.

This year the eldest family member in attendance is Mrs. Louise Valliant Willis of Oxford, Maryland. She is ninety-nine years of age and is the daughter of Susan Parsons Valliant, the youngest member of the original twelve Parsons siblings. The youngest member will be Natalie Chance Schmidt of Easton, Maryland. About sixty Parsons family members are expected to attend from all over the country. In recent years, family members have attended the Eastern Shore reunion from as far away as Seattle, Washington.

The current generation of Parsons family members represents all walks of life from many parts of the country and from around the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The Parsons family reunion officers are Jan Valliant O'Neal of Kensington, Maryland, Marguerite Schimpff Webster of Washington, District of Columbia, Cathy Newton Schmidt of Easton, Maryland, and Robert Thomas Valliant, Jr., of Oxford, Maryland.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to congratulate the Parsons family for celebrating their fiftieth family reunion and honoring the significance of family in the building of our great nation.

HONORING KEVIN BRACKEN

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, today I honor Kevin Bracken, a native of Chicago, IL. Kevin,

through many amazing feats of athletic prowess, has earned himself a place on the U.S. Olympic Greco-Roman wrestling team. He is the only member of the Greco-Roman team from Illinois, which consists entirely of first-year Olympians. This is truly a remarkable accomplishment, and I know he will represent his country with great pride, strength, and skill.

Kevin grew up on the south side of Chicago, placing third in the 1990 State Championships for St. Laurence High School. He then attended Illinois State University, where he was a three-time qualifier for the NCAA and received the 1994 Male Athlete of the Year award. Since those early achievements in his life, he has only gone forward, constantly surpassing expectations of all those around him, no matter how high set.

His friends, family, and former teammates must be, and should be proud to witness what he has accomplished, and what he will certainly continue to accomplish in the future. Kevin is a credit to all those who have held faith in him, and through perseverance and extraordinary effort, he has earned his place among the elite of his profession.

Mr. Speaker, I offer my congratulations to Kevin Bracken, and wish him the best of luck in his continuing career. I am sure he will continue to make them proud.

RECOGNIZING BRADENTON, FL, AS A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE

HON. DAN MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to congratulate a city in my congressional district, Bradenton, FL. Bradenton has been recognized in the July 2000 issue of Money magazine as one of the best places to retire. Money quotes Bradenton as, "a perfect Florida beach town for sun and sailing." I agree and believe it is much more than that.

With 238 sunny days a year it is no surprise to me that this area made headlines. The coastal community with a population under 50,000 is located just south of Tampa Bay. Bradenton's 27 miles of beautiful, white and beaches provide the perfect environment for sailing, skiing, fishing and various outdoor activities.

The criteria used by Money to evaluate nearly 500 communities included population, opportunities for educational advancement, outdoor activities, cultural amenities, quality of medical care, and accessible transportation. Factors that also influenced the ratings were cost of living, taxes, and home prices. Today's seniors live an active lifestyle, so each community was also evaluated on the various activities in the area.

Bradenton offers an array of cultural attractions including the Golden Apple Dinner Theater and the Florida West Coast Symphony. The South Florida Museum and Bishop Planetarium is a unique complex that features cultural and historical exhibits and laser light shows. The ballet, the opera, art galleries, historical parks, and museums are all within the city limits. Retirees can stay busy at the various outdoor festivals throughout the year.

Bradenton is home to the Pittsburgh Pirates spring training complex and is within an hour's